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### THE BIBLICAL PROCESS OF RESTORATION

Part I - Reasons Why This Process Has Been Neglected Or Avoided  
Part II - Suggested Procedure For Restoring A Fallen Christian

We must begin with the understanding that the basis for all that we do must be the absolute authority of God's Word, and we must recognize that God requires our obedience to it (James 1:22-25). We must also acknowledge that Satan is behind the spiritual warfare to divide and devour God's people (I Pet. 5:8). Therefore, whenever we are confronted with any problem/conflict in our circumstances or relationships, our first question must be, "What does God's word tell us to do in such situations? Are there principles, examples and illustrations for us to follow?" Now in the case of a Christian who falls into sin, "backslides", breaks fellowship with the Lord and/or other believers, turns away from the truth and is unrepentant, what does God want us to do? Much of the Old Testament was written to call God's people back to a right relationship to Himself! Think about it! Every one of the prophets were continually calling for repentance...or else! To the self righteous, proud mind set in most people today, that's not a popular message to be willing to hear, let alone tell someone else! Unfortunately the connotations of Church Discipline (Matt. 18:15-17) has gotten a negative response, perhaps because of imbalanced demands of repentance with no love, understanding or hope given with the goal of "restoration". While we should never minimize a sinning, hurting, rebelling, person, we should also be careful not to "candy-coat" the seriousness of sin and its devastating consequences to everybody involved. We must balance our approach with prayerful consciousness of the goal - RESTORATION. (Read Gal. 6:1; James 5:19-20 to clearly see that this is what we are commanded by God to do). In Gal. 6:1 it is the Greek word "katartizo" which means "to mend", repairing something to bring it back to its original condition; putting dislocated bones back in place. It's not to be a "hammer attack" which damages a person and pushes them further away! The Motive and the Manner are defined in the previous study "Restoring One Another", so I will not need to elaborate any further here. Observe the Biblical texts that give us instruction regarding what we are to do:

Matt. 5:23-25	Rom. 15:14	Phil. 4:2-3
Matt. 7:1-5;16-20	I Cor. 5-6	Rom. 14:19
Matt. 8:15-22	Gal. 6:1-5	Rom. 12:18
Luke 17:3	Col. 3:16	I Thes. 5:13-14
Lev. 19:17	James 5:19-20	II Thes. 3:6, 14-15
	Prov. 27:5-6	

Certainly these references should clear up any question as to whether God requires our involvement in restoring fallen Christians. We also see from His own example as the Good Shepherd (Matt. 18:12-14) and learn about the Father's heart in Luke 15 as well as the numerous O.T. references which should compel us all the more to have the same restorative action and care for our own spiritual family! Unfortunately very few churches ever really care enough to take the process seriously.

Part I - Reasons Why the Restorative Procedure Has Been Neglected or Avoided

- (a) **Not knowing you were supposed to** (now you do)
- (b) **Not knowing how to do it** (these specific/practical Biblical steps will inform you)
- (c) **"It's none of my business". "I'm not going to butt into everybody else's lives"**. Objections like these subtly shift the focus from the previously observed Biblical statements. Once we understand the caring, loving heart of the Father we will share the value of restoring fallen brethren for their sake, the sake of the church and most of all for the sake of Christ. We just can't be content to let someone go (until we know we've fulfilled our scriptural responsibility). So, when someone is in unrepentant sin, God's Word says it is our business and what we're to do is to be done in love. To help us discern what is going on and when to get involved refer to the "Restoring One Another" study, the section entitled "The Moment". After all we are members of one another (Eph. 4:25) and what we do effects others in the body (I Cor. 12:12-27) for good or bad (Rom. 14:7-8).
- (d) A different kind of objection is: **"I don't want to offend them, hurt their feelings or make them mad at me"**. Unfortunately Satan has used those kind of thoughts as an excuse for Christians to not take a stand for Christ or share the gospel. Our obedience is the issue, not "projected, possible feelings". Just try plugging that objection into Jesus Christ's mouth - you see how inconsistent that is? Obviously HOW we go to someone, our motives, words, attitude...needs to be rightly prepared ahead of time to avoid needless conflicts. We speak the truth in love but even then - the TRUTH does hurt and sin, like the cancer must be removed through the appropriate measures. We simply cannot allow ourselves to seek the approval of men over the approval of God (Jn. 12:43). We are always accountable to God to fulfill our Biblical responsibility and trust the results to God. We are not responsible for how they respond, but certainly pray "intelligently" about it.
- (e) Another possible objection some may use to neglect their responsibility is, **"Just let them go, they've made their choice and we can't run their lives"**. If scripture was silent to the issue that might be an option, but scripture clearly details what are to do. If there were no moral values, standards or absolutes by which we should live then the consequential lawlessness would have destroyed humanity long ago! In fact just try that philosophy of "permissiveness" with children and see what results. God has revealed principles of truth by which we are to govern our "freedom of choice". In fact the book of Judges shows us the results of every man doing what was right in his own eyes and look what happened! Clearly even God Himself does not just let His children go, but brings chastening

into their lives to bring them back to the truth. (Heb. 12:5-11) The very word discipline means "to bring to conformity to a standard" and God has given the church the responsibility to hold its members accountable. (Matt. 18:15-17)

- (f) The idea of **"Let someone else do it"** is simply a "cop out" of one's Biblical responsibility and obviously if everybody said that think how tragic that would be...especially if you were the one who needed help. "Do unto others as you'd have them do unto you". God always rewards obedience! Remember the parable of The Good Samaritan!
- (g) Some may object **"They just need time. They'll change. Just give them time to think about things."** - That would be fine if they were daily in the Word of God and prayer, seeking God's will, continuing in the fellowship of the church, under the teaching of God's Word and getting godly counsel (Ps. 1, I Cor. 7:3-5). But if they're left to their own understanding, the counsel of the ungodly, influences of the world, the flesh and the devil, and rationalizing their choices apart from God's Truth, it would only deceive them further, sear their conscience, harden their heart and give Satan more ground and control. These negative things make it easier to reject God's Spirit, God's Word and His people, and thereby make it harder to restore them. We need to respond quickly, but sensitively, so as to not allow them to be "hardened" through the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:13; Matt. 5:23-25; Eph. 4:26-27).
- (h) Unfortunately some may not seek to restore others because of their own **pride**. Some actually may secretly relish the idea that someone's fallen into sin and that makes them feel spiritually superior (I Cor. 10:12). This leads only to further sin of exposing someone else's faults in a gossiping way, putting down others and making oneself feel "in control", or "on top of things" or "in the know" of what's going on. If one can remain indifferent to their sin with the idea that they're better than others then they've missed the heart of the Shepherd. **Pride** always leads to selfishness and that contradicts Phil. 2:1-30.
- (i) A final reason for not restoring a fallen brother or sister may be that ones own life **may not be right with God**. If someone is hindering quenching and grieving God's Spirit in ones own process of sanctifications (becoming like Christ), ones own sin would certainly cause one to avoid fulfilling any spiritual responsibilities. In this case you would benefit from the study of ("Help, I've Fallen...But I Can Get Up").

Since restoring one another is such an important spiritual responsibility within the body of Christ it was therefore necessary to dispel any possible excuses/reasons that may have made it previously confusing, difficult or neglected. Certainly it is easier to do nothing, take the path of least resistance, minimize it, pretend it's not that bad or say "whatever will be...will be". Never the less God's

Word is the map to guide us in living life the way God wants and it is He whom we are to obey and serve. That means sacrifice, effort, time, resources, prayer and involvement on our part. So what then, are some Biblical guidelines which we must consider in the process of restoring someone who's fallen into sin?

Part II - Suggested Procedure for Restoring a Fallen Christian

1. Humble yourself before the Lord (II Chron. 7:14; James 4:6-10). Be honest and open before God about what's going on in your own heart over these things. Be teachable and available to God to do His will in His way. God promises "grace" to this type of heart attitude but sets Himself in opposition to the proud!
2. Examine your own heart before the Lord (Matt. 7:3-5; I Cor. 11:28; II Cor. 13:5; Search ME O God...Ps. 139:23). Personally confessing and repenting of your own sin (I Jn. 1:5-10; Ps. 51; Prov. 28:13).
3. Be convinced of your spiritual responsibility to restore others who have strayed away and know the scriptural principles behind your actions (see the 15 listed references on the first page).
4. Prayerfully (James 1:5) depend (Prov. 3:5-6) on God's Word II Timothy 3:16-17; Ps. 119) and God's Spirit (Rom. 8:4-14; 26-27; Gal. 5:16, 18; Eph. 5:18) for guidance. The Bible is the Sword of the Spirit and He will never contradict what's already revealed (Eph. 6:17).
5. Evaluate the specific situation factually, thoroughly, sensitively, carefully and lovingly. (I Thes. 5:21; Prov. 14:15-16; 18:13, 17; 24:28-29; 25:2, 8-11). How do you know if one needs to be restored? Here are some possible questions to consider at this point:
  - (a) How will you know if someone has fallen away? What will the evidence/signs be?
  - (b) What Scriptural principles have been clearly violated or ignored? (Identify the problem). Put it into Biblical categories/terms.
  - (c) What has led up to their falling away?
  - (d) What has actually happened? (Get the facts).
  - (e) Was it deliberate and willful? Were they deceived? Or both?
  - (f) How far has it gone? How much of their life has been affected? How long have they been backslidden? (Get the "whole" picture in perspective). (See study on "Backsliding").
  - (g) What have they tried to do about it?
  - (h) Who is responsible to be involved in the restoration process of turning them back? (Family, church, authorities, friends, others)
  - (i) How will this need to be approached? What specific steps should be taken to turn them back? (Plan of action)
  - (j) What Scriptural principles should this procedure be based upon?
  - (k) Do they want help? Why or why not? What's causing their "resistance"?
  - (l) What kind of counsel, instruction, encouragement, support, reproof, correction, warning, admonition does this person need? (professional, medical, psychiatric, nutritional...)? What can you do to see that this person gets the help they need?
  - (m) What will happen if this person is not "restored" and "turned back"? (See "Consequences of Sin".)
  - (n) What is the chastening of the Lord? (Heb. 12:5-13; Rev. 3:19)

- (o) How does church discipline fit in? (Matt. 18:15-20; I Cor. 5-6; I Tim. 1:20)
- (p) What is the "death" (sin unto death) the unrepentant/unrestored sinner will, perhaps, experience? (James 5:20; I Jn. 5:16-17; Heb. 6:4-8; Jn. 15:6)
6. Prepare with Prayer (I Thes. 5:17) We can't ever minimize the seriousness of prayer! (Lk. 18:1; 22:31-32,40,46) Intercession for others is part of the "priesthood" of all believers. (Ezek. 22:30, I Pet. 2:5-9)
- (a) Pray for yourself for: understanding of appropriate scripture, sensitivity, attitude, wording, timing, and most of all wisdom (Js. 1:5).
- (b) Pray for them to be: approachable, teachable, convicted of all sin/rebellion, no longer resistant, humbled, honest with God and others, open to the truth, willing to get help (restored), repentant and willing to forsake sin (Prov. 28:13), ready to change and return to the Lord, their family, the fellowship of believers, and the church. Pray that they would be miserable and confused until they get things right with God! (Hosea 2:5-7)
- (c) Pray that God would: work in everyone's life through this, accomplish His sovereign purpose in order to be glorified (not dishonored), raise up godly people to restore the fallen, "bind" Satan from further deceptions, take back the ground Satan's gained (II Cor. 10:4-5), put a "hedge of protection" around them (Job 1:10), use even natural consequences of sin to bring them to "brokenness" (Luke 15:14-19), and do whatever is necessary to bring them to repentance and restoration.
- (d) Pray that everyone (aware of this situation) would: learn from this whole experience, deal with sin building up in their own lives, draw near to the Lord, fulfill their spiritual responsibilities and that whoever has been "sinned against" (directly or indirectly) would respond Biblically and grow in Christ.
7. Prepare yourself: Gal. 6:1 says, "considering yourself lest you also be tempted". This possibly carries a two-fold way of applying it (a) considering yourself that you would also fall into the same sin (I Cor. 10:12), since all sin is common to man (I Cor. 10:13). Realize that by the grace of God that could be you! (b) if then you were in their shoes, how would you want someone to come to you, treat you, restore you?
8. Prepare Biblically: Make sure you understand the specific scripture that relate to this particular sin issue. What verses are you prepared to communicate defining the sin and their responsibility at this point. (as well as other related passages)
9. Prepare your exact wording: Write out what you are going to say in the order in which you can best communicate the truth. Even presuppose how you'll handle possible resistance on their part.
10. Go to them personally - face to face and privately. (Matt. 18:15, II Thes. 3:15; I Thes. 5:14) You may want to say right up front "Here's what I'm aware of ... Here's what I understand is going on... Is that correct?" You may need to get further facts - Ask them "What else is going on?" "Why did they do \_\_\_?" "Why's it hard or what's hindering them from obeying God?" Let them know

you are doing what scripture tells you to do in attempt to restore them. Show them from scripture what God says about all this. Ask them if they understand and if they are willing to repent. Call them to repentance (Lk. 17:3; 13:3) Encourage them to get help/counsel. Let them know of your love and support in truly helping them in their commitment to submit to God's authority. Assure them of your prayers and availability. If they need time to think about it, call them back in a few days (no more than a week) to find out what they are deciding to do. Notice the Biblical example of this first step in Gal. 2:11...Paul cared enough to confront Peter about his "hypocrisy" and he was restored, see II Peter 3:15. If this person repents and is restored to the Lord, their spouse, children, parents, family, others and the church...GREAT! Praise the Lord! If they continue in their sin, neither repent or follow through with the appropriate Biblical action and they "refuse to hear", it indicates that they are "digging in deeper" in their rejection of God and His Truth. Matt. 18:16 clearly gives us the next step if they continue in unrepentant rebellion.

11. Go back to them again and repeat the process, with one or two more so that "in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" Matt. 18:16; I Tim. 5:20; III Jn. God established this law in Deut. 19:15 so that all "accusations" would be confirmed by other witnesses and so that the whole thing would not be just a misunderstanding or some insignificant "nit-picking" unfair attack. The witnesses that go along are also to be confirming and communicating the sin issue and the need for repentance and restoration. Further more, they are also needed to affirm if the person is still unrepentant, or is willing to change (submit to God's authority). (Notice the Biblical example that clearly illustrates this step in II Cor. 13:1-2 in which Paul had called the Corinthians to respond appropriately to the second warning about their sin, where there had been confirmation by other witnesses). Now if the person still refuses to repent, Jesus Himself clearly says what must be done!
12. "Tell it unto the church" (Matt. 18:17a). At this point the elders (spiritual leadership) of the church would need to "formally" get involved. As Jay Adams points out the leaders should obviously be aware of what's going on so that during testimony time somebody just doesn't stand up and "drop a bomb" saying we must cut off so and so because they're unrepentant! Those who attempted to restore the fallen one should present the situation to the leadership. Then as the N.T. examples possibly imply, the elders (leadership) should contact the one accused for the purpose of investigating and confirming what has been reported and how they've responded to the attempts at restoration. This should be done with the attempt to win them back and restore them! (Prov. 18:13, 17; 14:15; 25:2; I Cor. 5) The phrase "telling the church" obviously implies a public formal statement of this person's continual rejection of spiritual truth, refusal to listen, and unrepentance. It emphasizes the need for the whole church to make their "final" attempts to reach out with love and concern to this one by writing letters, making phone calls, making visits, with the purpose of winning them back. This third stage of the Mt. 18:15-17 process is exemplified in II Cor. 2:5-8. In that particular case it worked!

13. Finally, if after all the attempts of restoration are rejected and they refuse to hear the church Mt. 18:17 says, "let him be unto you as a heathen and a tax collector". To understand this we must recognize that the Jews who heard this clearly saw those types of people as outcasts and would not even associate with them. In fact a tax collector was the worst because he had "sold out" by choice to defect to the enemy (Rome). The idea is that the unrepentant person is officially and formally "put out" of the church and fellowship of believers - It's not that we no longer care, but they've rejected all that we stand for and we can't go on pretending that all is okay! Since all the attempts of restoration have been unproductive Jesus Himself instructs that they be "put out of fellowship" (in fact that's exactly what excommunication means; "disfellowshipped"). The person would also be clearly informed of this leaving the "door open" for them to return, but only if they repent. Are there any other scripture illustrations of this final stage? Observe the following statements: such as "remove him from your midst" (I Cor. 5:2) "clean out the leaven (I Cor. 5:7) "get him out of your midst" (I Cor. 5:13) "deliver this person over to satan" (I Cor. 5:5) "I have handed them over to Satan so they will be taught by discipline not to blaspheme" (I Tim. 1:20) "withdraw yourselves from (avoid) every brother who walks disorderly and not after the tradition which he received of us" (II Thes. 3:6) "If any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him that he may be ashamed" (II Thes. 3:14) "I wrote unto you in an epistle not to have company with fornicators...or with the covetous, or extortioners or with idolaters...But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such a one, no, do not even eat"(I Cor. 5:9-11). Even the sharing of a meal (culturally significant as symbolic of hospitality and acceptance) is not allowed under the circumstances when one has rejected the Lord and spiritual authority. "Yet count him not as an enemy, but admonish him as a brother".(II Thes. 3:15) Therefore, this means that you can't just get together with them for a "good time" pretending all is well, but the only terms on which scripturally we have any basis for getting together with them are for encouraging them to confess and repent of their rebelliousness and willful sin. (Rom. 16:17-18) These various references concerning terminating all other previous relationships with them are for two reasons (1) for the purity of the church, and (2) to make them feel enough shame (II Thes. 3:14) to ultimately bring them back to the Lord. If they do repent then II Cor. 2:1-11 is the Biblical example illustrating that we should "forgive", "comfort" and "reaffirm our love". Also note Luke 15 which shows that when the father had to finally "give up" and let his son go, eventually he did return and was joyfully restored!

What then? After all this, what if they still refuse to repent after they're put out of the church? The following references (and contexts) are warnings of God's judgement and chastening upon the impenitent. (Heb. 10:31; 6:1-8; Jn. 15:2,6; Acts 5:1-14; I Cor. 11:17-32; Heb. 12:5-11; Prov. 23:14; 28:9,14; 29:1; Js. 5:19-20;

I Jn. 5:16; Rev. 2:5; Deut. 17:8-13 details how Israel was to be involved in restoration/disciplinary action.) "Return...and I will heal your backslidings" (Jer. 3:22).

Certainly there are many more questions that may be raised such as: What happens when one strays from the truth? Why does one stray? What could happen to one who backslides? How does God view sin? What are the consequences of sin? What is the chastening of the Lord? What's the difference between righteously judging (discerning others sin) and unrighteously judging others (which we should not do)? What if I don't confront them? Will the unrepentent physically die? Would they lose their salvation? What must a person do to come back to the Lord and be restored? How can one keep from falling into sin? All of these are answered in other available studies which could not possibly be answered simply from one verse or statement. I therefore, encourage you to contact me regarding these Bible studies.

RADIO BIBLE CLASS DISCOVERY DIGEST  
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## Advice for Today

by Maurice Horn, RBC Biblical Counselor

### Judging

**Q:** I am confused. Jesus said in Matthew 7:1, "Judge not that you be not judged." Paul said in 2 Corinthians 6:14, "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers." How can I know if a person is an unbeliever or not without breaking the Lord's command not to judge?

**A:** Jesus' statement in Matthew 7:1 must be considered in its context. He was addressing religious people of His day who were condemning and criticizing others. In verse 5, Jesus had described these self-appointed critics as hypocrites who had beams in their own eyes yet were claiming to see specks in their brother's eyes.

To judge someone rightly is a spiritual way of lifting a brother who has fallen into sin. In John 7:24, Jesus said, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." And Paul emphasized this truth when he said, "Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted" (Galatians 6:1).

There are several areas in which Christians have the responsibility of determining "righteous judgment" for

the purpose of helping new Christians or those who are backslidden. One of these areas is the determination as to whether or not a doctrine should be accepted (see 2 Timothy 4:1-4).

Righteous judgment is exercised in determining if a doctrine is scriptural, and the Bible is the Christian's only source of authority. Doctrines not true to the Word of God must be rejected as unacceptable.

Righteous judgment must also be exercised when there is sin in a Christian's life. This judgment may lead to public rebuke or possibly church discipline. The apostle Paul faced this problem with the church at Corinth. Sin in the lives of church members had caused division in the church. Some members were even taking others to court to settle their differences. Great disgrace came upon the church and led the apostle to issue this strong warning:

*Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints?*

*Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?*

*Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life? (1 Corinthians 6:1-3).*

Righteous judgment is the serious responsibility of church leaders and mature believers. It must be done scripturally and prayerfully for the purpose of helping all believers and to keep the church doctrinally sound and morally pure. ☺

"To gain a more balanced" Scriptural perspective of these concepts, see other studies: "Restoring One Another", "Peacemaker", "Judgment vs. Discernment", "A Person is Hurting", "What If They Don't Want My Help?" and "Biblical Confrontation."

#### Recommended Reading:

The Elements of Church Discipline - Dr. John MacArthur Jr.

The Church in God's Program - Robert L. Saucy  
Church Standards - RPCES

Book of Church Order - PCA

Shepherding God's Flock - Dr. Jay E. Adams

How To Be A People Helper - Dr. Gary Collins

Rediscovering A Forgotten Truth

- Bill Gothard

Ready to Restore - Jay Adams (Excellent)

Competent to Counsel - J. Adams (Excellent)